

REMARKS

I. Introduction

Claims 1-14 are all the claims pending in the application, and claims 1-14 have been examined. Claims 1-2, 4-8 and 12-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Baran et al., U.S. Patent No. Re. 34,429 (hereinafter "Baran"). Additionally, claims 3 and 9-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Baran in view of Tadamura et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,537,401 (hereinafter "Tadamura"). Claim 14 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Baran in view of Yamakita, U.S. Patent No. 5,956,681 (hereinafter "Yamakita").

Applicant overcomes the rejections of claims 1-10 and 12-14 as follows.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 11 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant rewrites claim 11 in independent form, thereby placing claim 11 in condition for immediate allowance.

III. Claim Rejections -- 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-2, 4-8 and 12-13 stand rejected under § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Baran.

A. Claims 1, 12 and 13

Applicant amends claim 1 to recite that the workflow control table stores the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document image in advance (*see also* claims 12 and 13). Additionally, Applicant amends claim 1 to further clarify that the image identifying server processes the operation document image (*see also* claims 12 and 13). Thus, for example and not by way of limitation, an operation document may have, in addition to letters, figures, symbols, etc., several blank spaces which are required to be filled with various information, such as numerals, words or signatures in respective departments or destinations. The presence of such blank spaces can be detected by the image identifying server so that the species of the operation document image is identified and the next destination is determined with reference to a workflow control table (*see* claims 1, 12 and 13). Subsequently, the operation document image can be transferred to its next destination where the required information can be provided/updated. Therefore, an operation document image can be transferred and processed without requiring description of the processing or identification of the destination to be specified on the document itself.

Applicant respectfully submits that these amendments are not intended to narrow the scope of the original claims, but are rather for precision of language and to explicitly recite

within the claim what was believed to have already been implicitly defined therein.

Accordingly, these amendments do not foreclose application of reasonable equivalents.

Thus, claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, "a workflow control table which stores in advance the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document image" (*see also* claims 12 and 13). The workflow control table stores a species, a destination and an operation to be performed on the operation document image. Furthermore, an image identifying server identifies the species of an operation document image, so that the system can retrieve the identified species stored in the workflow control table, thereby automatically recognizing the stored destination and operation corresponding to the identified species. Applicant respectfully submits that Baran fails to disclose or suggest these exemplary features of claim 1 and thus, claim 1 is not anticipated by Baran (*see also* claims 12 and 13).

For example and not by way of limitation, Baran fails to disclose or suggest the recited workflow control table. The Examiner alleges that Baran discloses a workflow control table as element 28 of Fig. 1 and element 68 of Fig. 2f.

Baran describes a fax terminal retrieves information stored on a remote fax server (Baran: Abstract), which does not correspond to an image workflow system including a workflow control table. In particular, Baran describes a disk memory 28 wherein information is pre-stored such that the information can be selectively requested by and subsequently delivered to a fax transceiver 10 (Baran: col. 6, lines 4-34). The disk memory 28 of Baran does not correspond to a workflow control table. For example, the disk memory 28 of Baran does not store in advance the

species of an operation document. Indeed, the disk memory 28 of Baran merely stores information to be sent to the requester (Baran: col. 6, lines 28-34). Consequently, unlike the recited workflow control table, the disk memory 28 of Baran cannot provide the destination of the data or the processing to be applied thereto according to the contents stored in the disk memory 28.

The Examiner alleges that Baran discloses a species of an operation document as element 46 of Fig. 1. Baran describes a bar code 46 which encodes an information retrieval number (Baran: col. 7, lines 14-29). The bar code 46 is affixed to an advertisement 44 in a magazine, and upon receipt of the bar code 46, a fax server 20 decodes the bar code 46 to retrieve the desired information stored in the disk memory 28 (*Id.*).

The bar code 46 of Baran does not correspond to the recited species because, for example, the bar code 46 is not identified "to retrieve the species stored in the workflow control table in response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation", as recited in claim 1 (*see also* claims 12 and 13).

The Examiner also alleges that Baran discloses a species of an operation document as element A of Fig. 2f. Baran describes a cover sheet to be used by an owner/advertiser to add, remove or modify the information stored in disk memory 28 (Baran: col. 8, lines 22-25). Field 68 (of which element A is one entry) is an informational field that identifies the information needed to be entered into each of sub-fields 66a-66f (Baran: col. 8, lines 27-29). In other words, Field 68 is simply a static label that indicates what information each of sub-fields 66a-66f

corresponds to. Thus, sub-field 66a relates to the starting address in memory disk 28 where the data is (or will be) stored (Baran: col. 8, lines 31-33; Fig. 2f).

Neither the information field 68 (element A) nor the sub-field 66a, which indicates a starting address in the memory disk 28, corresponds to the recited species because, for example, neither field 68 nor sub-field 66a is stored in advance in a workflow control table. To the contrary, field 68 is printed on the cover sheet for the user's benefit and sub-field 66a is filled in by a user who wants to access the memory disk 28. Furthermore, neither field 68 (element A) nor sub-field 66a is identified in order "to retrieve the species stored in the workflow control table in response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation", as recited in claim 1 (*see also* claims 12 and 13).

In view of the above, the disk memory 28 of Baran does not store in advance the species of an operation document. Thus, the disk memory 28 of Baran does not disclose or suggest "a workflow control table which stores in advance the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document", as recited in claim 1 (*see also* claims 12 and 13).

Similarly, the Examiner's allegation that element 68 of Fig. 2f discloses a workflow control table is also incorrect. As discussed above, Baran describes an informational field 68 that identifies the information needed to be entered into each of sub-fields 66a-66f (Baran: col. 8, lines 27-29; Fig. 2f). Field 68 does not correspond to a workflow control table. Instead, Field 68 is simply a static label that indicates what information each of sub-fields 66a-66f corresponds to.

For example, element D of information field 68 indicates that sub-field 66d corresponds to a first password.

Neither the information field 68 nor the sub-fields 66a-66f correspond to the recited workflow control table because, for example, neither field 68 nor sub-fields 66a-66f store in advance "the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document image". To the contrary, the information supplied on the cover sheet of Fig. 2f is manually provided by a user each time data is to be added to, removed from, or modified in the disk memory 28.

Baran also fails to disclose or suggest "an image identifying server for identifying the species of the operation document image to retrieve the species stored in the workflow control table in response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation, and to transmit a recognized result together with the operation document image to the network", as recited in claim 1 (*see also* claims 12 and 13).

The Examiner alleges that Baran discloses an image identifying server as element 20 of Fig. 1 (*see also* Fig. 8 of Baran). To the contrary, fax server 20 includes a machine reading (mark sense/OCR) system 24 that processes a received signal (Baran: col. 6, lines 18-23). The machine reading subsystem 24 senses markings on a selector sheet electronically from a bit map of the selector sheet and interprets the user markings on each selector sheet page (Baran: col. 6, lines 58-63). The value of these markings are translated into data commands to determine the locations of the stored data to be retrieved and sent to the calling fax machine 10 (Baran: col. 6,

lines 63-66). The recognizing and decoding of a user's markings as carried out by the fax server 20 does not correspond to the recited image identifying server because, for example, the machine reading subsystem 24 does not retrieve a species stored in the workflow control table in response to identifying the species (allegedly, the user's markings) in order to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation of the operation document image.

Indeed, the system of Baran fundamentally differs from the claimed invention. Baran describes transmitting a copy of information stored in a fax server 20 by use of remote fax transceivers 10 (Baran: Fig. 1). Baran does not relate to and cannot execute transmitting input data (an operation document image) to a destination terminal together with an operation assigned to the input data, as determined by the contents of the input data.

Thus, claims 1, 12 and 13 are not anticipated by Baran for at least the above exemplary reasons.

B. Claims 2 and 4-8

In view of the aforementioned amendments to claim 1, Applicant amends claims 2, 6 and 7 for consistency.

Claims 2 and 4-8 are not anticipated by Baran at least by virtue of their dependency, as well as the additional features recited therein.

For example and not by way of limitation, claim 2 recites "an input device directly coupled to the image identifying server to supply an operation document as the operation

document image into the image identifying server". Conversely, Baran describes a fax transceiver 10 is indirectly connected to a fax server 20 through a telco switch 12 (Baran: Fig. 1).

IV. Claim Rejections -- 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

A. Claims 3 and 9-10

Claims 3 and 9-10 stand rejected under § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Baran in view of Tadamura.

Like Baran, Tadamura fundamentally differs from the claimed invention. For example and not by way of limitation, the claimed invention provides that an operation to be performed on an operation document image and a destination for the operation document image are extracted from the contents of the operation document image itself (*see* claims 1-14). Tadamura fails to teach or suggest any such operation document image or the extraction of operations and destinations therefrom.

While the Examiner acknowledges that Baran fails to teach or suggest that a recognized result is transmitted to the network together with the operation document image in the form of a packet, the Examiner alleges that Tadamura makes up for this acknowledged deficiency of Baran.

Since Tadamura fails to make up for the above-noted deficiencies of Baran (*see* above remarks regarding claims 1, 12 and 13), claims 3 and 9-10 are patentable over a reasonable combination, if any, of Baran and Tadamura at least by virtue of their dependency.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Application No. 09/244,419
Attorney Docket No. Q53219

B. Claim 14

Claim 14 stands rejected under § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Baran in view of Yamakita.

While the Examiner acknowledges that Baran fails to teach or suggest that the destination is an IP address, the Examiner alleges that Yamakita makes up for this acknowledged deficiency of Baran.

Since Yamakita fails to make up for the above-noted deficiencies of Baran (*see* above remarks regarding claims 1, 12 and 13), claim 14 is patentable over a reasonable combination, if any, of Baran and Yamakita at least by virtue of its dependency.

V. Information Disclosure Statement

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner provide a signed and initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 submitted with the IDS filed on April 27, 1999 to acknowledge consideration of the references cited therein.

VI. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are amended as follows:

1. (Amended) An image workflow system for use in transferring, through a network, an operation document image (or a work sheet image) ~~extracted from an operation document~~ which is featured by a species, a destination, and operation to be handled to the operation document image, comprising:

a workflow control table which stores in advance the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document image; and

an image identifying server for identifying the species of the operation document ~~from the operation document image~~ to retrieve the species stored in the workflow control table in response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation, and to transmit a recognized result together with the operation document image to the network.

2. (Amended) The system of claim 1, further comprising an input device directly coupled to the image identifying server to supply ~~the an~~ operation document as the operation document image into the image identifying server.

6. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the image identifying server identifies the species of the operation document image by using character recognition of an identification code representative of the species when the identification code is included in the operation document image.

7. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the image identifying server identifies the species of the operation document image by recognizing an image pattern particular to the operation document image when an identification code which stands for the species is not included in the operation document image.

11. (Amended) ~~The system of claim 1,~~ An image workflow system for use in transferring, through a network, an operation document image (or a work sheet image) extracted from an operation document which is featured by a species, a destination, and operation to be handled to the operation document, comprising:

a workflow control table which stores the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document; and

an image identifying server for identifying the species of the operation document from the operation document image to retrieve the species stored in the workflow control table in

response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation, and to transmit a recognized result to the network,

wherein the image identifying server observes efficiency of a plurality of terminals and selects one of the terminals which have the lowest efficiency as the destination terminal when the plurality of terminals are associated with the single identification species in the workflow control table.

12. (Amended) A method of managing image workflow for transferring, through a network, an operation document image ~~extracted from an operation document~~ which is featured by a species, a destination, and operation to be handled to the operation document image, the method comprising the steps of:

storing in advance, the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document image; and

identifying the species of the ~~operation document from the~~ operation document image to retrieve the stored species in response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation, and to transmit a recognized result together with the operation document image to the network.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
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13. (Amended) A computer readable medium which stores a program operable for managing image workflow for transferring, through a network, an operation document image ~~extracted from an operation document~~ which is featured by a species, a destination, and operation to be handled to the operation document image, the method comprising the steps of:

storing in advance, the species, the destination, and the operation assigned to each operation document image; and

identifying the species of the ~~operation document from the~~ operation document image to retrieve the stored species in response to the identified species, to automatically recognize the corresponding destination and operation, and to transmit a recognized result together with the operation document image to the network.